

Congressman John Adler demands that those responsible for mistreating veterans be held accountable

Philadelphia, PA - Today, Congressman John Adler, the only Philadelphia-area member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, called for a congressional investigation into reports that the VA Hospital in Philadelphia did not do enough to prevent medical misconduct. In a letter to Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner, Congressman Adler called the failure of the hospital to prevent this misconduct, a monumental oversight.

"It is unacceptable that the brave men and women who so selflessly served their country have been faced with poor treatment and neglect by the hospital created to protect them," Congressman John Adler said. "Today we are facing numerous federal agencies that have turned a blind eye toward the treatment of our American heroes. We must determine the responsible parties, hold them accountable and fix our system to prevent this problem from happening in the future."

The Philadelphia VA serves more than eight counties in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Congressman Adler represents more than 60,000 veterans, including residents of Burlington and Camden County who seek medical treatment regularly at the Philadelphia VA Hospital.

The complete text of the letter Congressman Adler sent Chairman Filner follows:

June 22, 2009

Representative Bob Filner, Chairman
House Veterans' Affairs Committee
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Filner:

I am writing in regard to recent news accounts of a rogue cancer unit at the Veterans' Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. According to an article in yesterday's New

York Times, Dr. Gary D. Kao, a doctor at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center, botched 92 out of 116 surgical cancer treatments that he performed on veterans suffering from prostate cancer. It was further reported in the referenced article that federal regulators knew of Dr. Kao's failed procedures and took no action to remedy the situation. Additionally, the article stated that Dr. Kao's surgical team performed these procedures for nearly a year with equipment that the radiation safety committee at the VA hospital knew was broken.

The Philadelphia VA serves more than eight counties in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and I am the only Member from this area on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. My Congressional District is home to more than 60,000 veterans, and many of these veterans seek medical treatment regularly at the Philadelphia VA hospital.

It is clear from reading this article that the federal government failed on every level to protect these veterans. It is simply unacceptable that a Department created to serve the brave men and women who so selflessly served their country would allow such malfeasance to occur. We must determine the responsible parties, hold them accountable and fix our system to prevent this problem from happening in the future.

Accordingly, our committee must conduct investigatory hearings on the serious wrongdoings committed at the Philadelphia VA hospital. I request that among those called before the committee should be Dr. Kao, Dr. Kao's immediate supervisors at the hospital, Dr. Charles M. Anderson, head of the VA's national radiation safety committee, and Steven A. Reynolds, director of nuclear materials safety for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. These parties should be made to account for their willful and knowing disservice to these cancer-stricken members of the veteran community.

Thank you for your prompt response to this request.

Sincerely,

John Adler
Member of Congress